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SPACE: The Womb of Life?

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

If there is no God, as the atheist claims, then how did life originate? Did it spontaneously generate? Many concede that there's just too much scientific evidence against abiogenesis for it to be palatable (see Miller, 2012). But if life did not create itself, it had to come from somewhere, and the atheist "cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door" (Lewontin, 1997, p. 31). So, where is he left? Outer space?

That is precisely what many in the evolutionary community are hoping for. Of course, this seeming solution is merely a mirage. Simply pushing the problem of abiogenesis off to another place in the Universe does not solve the problem. It is a tactic to forestall the inevitable, hoping that, since there is so much we do not know about the Universe, abiogenesis may be possible elsewhere. But in reality, the problem remains. There is no scientific evidence to substantiate the idea that the laws of the Universe would allow the formation of life from non-life. We must still await the development of a legitimate answer from the atheist: from whence came life?

SPACE FOSSILS?

Regardless of this attempt to divert attention from the problem of abiogenesis, there is a growing interest in the prospect that life could have originated from space. Recently, a NASA scientist, Richard Hoover, of the Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama, authored an article in the *Journal of Cosmology* in which he claimed to have discovered evidence of microfossils—fossilized extraterrestrials—in a meteorite that

hit France in the 1800s (Hoover, 2011). Michael Lemonick, science writer for *Time*, said, "[M]aybe life first arose in outer space and came to earth fully formed. It's an astonishing idea, but it's not completely crazy" (Lemonick, 2011).

Skepticism abounds in the scientific community concerning Hoover's discoveries, since claims of proof of extraterrestrial life have always proven to be bogus (e.g., Taylor, 1997; Nagy, et al., 1963). Biologist, P.Z. Myers, of the University of Minnesota Morris, said regarding Hoover's discovery, "This work is garbage. I'm surprised anyone is granting it any credibility at all.... I'm looking forward to the publication next year [in the *Journal of Cosmology*—JM] of the discovery of an extraterrestrial rabbit in a meteor" (as quoted in Lemonick). Chief scientist in the science division at NASA, Paul Hertz, even said that Hoover's article was rejected from publication in a more established, peer-reviewed journal. Concerning Hoover's article, he said, "While we value the free exchange of ideas, data, and information as part of scientific and technical inquiry, NASA cannot stand behind or support a scientific claim unless it has been peer-reviewed or thoroughly examined by other qualified experts" (as quoted in "Alien Life in Meteorites: 'Remarkable Achievement' or 'Garbage'?" 2011).

ORGANIC MOLECULES FROM SPACE

This stance by NASA casts serious doubt on the validity of Hoover's claims, and yet he is not alone in his theory about life originating from outer space, in spite

of the lack of evidence to support it. So, the hope remains alive. Astronomers have recently found organic materials in meteorites (e.g., Nakamura-Messenger, et al., 2006), which some believe could be proof of previously living organisms in outer space and that "may have seeded the early Earth with the building blocks of life" (Jeffs, 2006). Mike Zolensky, a NASA cosmic mineralogist, said, "If, as we suspect, this type of meteorite has been falling onto Earth throughout its entire history, then the Earth was seeded with these organic globules at the same time life was forming here" (as quoted in Jeffs). Sun Kwok, the Dean of Science and Chair Professor of Physics at the University of Hong Kong, said, "If this is the case, life on Earth may have had an easier time getting started as these organics can serve as the basic ingredients for life" (as quoted in Chow, 2011). Organic materials are generally defined as decayed materials which contain carbon (like life forms on Earth), presumably because the materials were once living.

There are several issues with these findings which will severely dampen the hopes of the atheist. First of all, the find is not nearly as significant as one might think based on the media hype. Organic materials from space reaching Earth in no way means that the primary problem for atheists has been solved. The presence of a few blocks lying around in a junk yard does not in any way imply that the blocks will be capable of arranging themselves into a complex machine that will then come to life, start walking around, and commence giving birth to other buildings. Abiogenesis is a chasm which all scientific evidence indicates cannot be crossed (Miller, 2012). And what's more, consider the feature of the organic material that has given evolutionary scientists such excitement: the organic materials are in the shape of a bubble. "Some biologists think that making a bubble-shape is the first step on the path to biotic life. 'We may be a step closer to knowing where our ancestors came from,'" according to Keiko Nakamura-Messenger, NASA space scientist and leader of the team who

conducted the research on the meteor remains (Jeffs, 2006). A “bubble-shape” is the cause of the excitement. Not life from non-life. Not substantiated proof of the existence of aliens. Not proof of macroevolution. A “bubble-shape.”

No wonder the articles discussing such discoveries are riddled with disclaimers—“if,” “maybe,” “might,” “possibly,” “could,” “potentially,” and “think” are commonplace with scientific speculation, as they are in the articles reviewing this find. However, if a person pays too much attention to the **brazen, irresponsible, misleading titles** oftentimes given to the latest discoveries by the media, the subtle disclaimers can easily be disregarded or altogether missed (e.g., “Life on Mars,” Jaroff, 1996). For instance, in the **last sentence** of its article on the discovery, *ScienceDaily* admitted, “Whether these delivered organic compounds played any role in the development of life on Earth **remains an open question**” (“Astronomers Discover...,” 2011, emp. added). Toward the end of their article on the discovery, *Space.com* noted that Kwok admitted, “While it may be **too soon** to determine whether these organic compounds played a role in kick-starting the development of life on Earth, it certainly is a **possibility**” (Chow, emp. added). One can speculate, conjecture, and engage in baseless hope all he wants, but the truth remains: organic materials from space do nothing to help the evolutionist move from the scientific impossibility of jumping from non-life to life in nature.

A second problem is that terrestrial contamination is always a significant factor scientists must consider in any studies involving extraterrestrial materials passing through the Earth’s atmosphere and reaching the Earth, and this has historically been the case. How can a scientist know with certainty that a meteorite, moving at immense speeds, that literally smashes into the carbon-bearing Earth, has not been contaminated with terrestrial organic compounds? Scientists recognize this as a potential factor in this case as well, by noting that the location of the meteorite could have helped in “minimizing terrestrial contamination”

(Jeffs, 2006). This implies that terrestrial contamination could still have been a factor, though, they hope, “minimized.” It **cannot** be considered a non-issue in the discovery. In other words, nothing can be said conclusively about what has been found in this meteorite from the 1800s.

Third, last year, astronomers found evidence that complex organic molecules can be found all over the Universe (Kwok and Zhang, 2011). According to *ScienceDaily*, “The results suggest that complex organic compounds are **not the sole domain of life but can be made naturally by stars**.... The team’s discovery suggests that complex organic compounds can be synthesized in space **even when no life forms are present**” (“Astronomers Discover...,” emp. added). Kwok and colleague, Yong Zhang, also of the University of Hong Kong, the scientists who made the discovery, said, “Our work has shown that stars have no problem making complex organic compounds under near-vacuum conditions. Theoretically, this is impossible, but observationally we can see it happening” (as quoted in “Astronomers Discover...”). Kwok further explained, “It is quite possible that **the organics in meteorites** are remnants of star dust in the solar nebula. The star dust [was] ejected by nearby planetary nebula[s]

and survived the journey across the galaxy” (as quoted in Chow, emp. added). *Space.com* explains,

[s]uch chemical complexity was thought to arise only from **living organisms**, but the results of the new study show that **these organic compounds can be created in space even when no life forms are present**. In fact, such complex organics could be produced naturally by stars, and at an extremely **rapid pace** (Chow, emp. added).

ScienceDaily adds, “Most interestingly, this organic star dust is similar in structure to complex organic compounds found **in meteorites**” (“Astronomers Discover...,” emp. added). In response to his co-discovery, Kwok said, “Nature is much more clever than we had imagined” (as quoted in Chow). So, these organic materials that are apparently found “everywhere in our own galaxy and in other galaxies” (Chow), which coat meteorites that collide with Earth, are not proof of life in outer space at all, since stars—non-living entities—can give rise to organic materials.

FLAWED EVOLUTIONARY DATING TECHNIQUES

Instead of continuing to trust blindly in the assumption of abiogenesis, which has thrust naturalistic scientists into

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space to try to find hope for their failed theory, why not interpret this latest find in a more reasonable way? This new discovery adds more weight to the dangers inherent in organic dating techniques, like radiocarbon dating, since such techniques rely on the fundamental assumption that organic materials are produced through the decay of biomaterials (i.e., materials which were once living). If, as this latest discovery suggests, organic materials can come about through other processes, caution should be taken in relying heavily on modern dating techniques for dating anything thought to be **very old**. The Creation model contends that such dating techniques are useless when used to date **extremely old** materials (i.e., materials older than a few hundred years), because those techniques assume a constant (slow) rate of decay and no contamination from outside sources. This latest discovery supports that contention.

Another fascinating and telling implication from this discovery regards the formation of coal and oil, which evolutionary geologists believe to be a process which takes immensely long periods of time to complete. According to Kwok, the organic compounds discovered are “so complex that their chemical structures resemble the makeup of coal and petroleum” (Chow). And what’s more, these complex organics which are thought to be produced naturally by stars, are formed “at an extremely rapid pace” (Chow). Kwok explains, “Coal and kerogen are products of life, and it took a long time for them to form. How do stars make such complicated organics under seemingly unfavorable conditions and [do] it so rapidly?” (as quoted in Chow). Scientists have no explanation as yet, since such a find stands as firm, conclusive evidence that

uniformitarianism—a fundamental tenet of evolutionary geology—is unreliable.

Granted, these compounds have been discovered **in space**, not on Earth, but as this article indicates, the growing contention among evolutionists is that these organic compounds have been traveling to Earth throughout history. If correct, this discovery should certainly affect the interpretation of geological discoveries and affect dating technique assumptions. Another thing can be inferred as well if organic compounds can be manufactured rapidly by inorganic sources. It may be the case that there are terrestrial processes going on now (or that were in effect in the past) that are doing the same thing—rapidly producing organic materials by inorganic sources—unbeknownst to us at this point in our scientific understanding of the Earth. The rapid production of organic materials by stars is evidence that viewing geological phenomena through the lense of catastrophism is a much more reasonable approach than uniformitarianism at interpreting geological processes.

CONCLUSION

Bottom line: atheistic evolution is not a plausible model for interpreting scientific data. No plausible scientific method has been developed to substantiate the idea that the Universe is extremely old. Uniformitarian principles fall short in their attempt to date the Earth, unlike catastrophism—a model which is supported by the Bible. Life does not come from non-life in nature. Organic compounds from outer space cannot solve the problem since the problem of abiogenesis remains. The search for the existence of aliens in order to explain the origin of life is unnecessary, since there is abundant evidence which supports the truth that there is a God who created the heavens, the Earth, and everything in them in six days (Exodus 20:11). Trust the Bible. It’s always right.

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Why America Must be Punished

As Moses' life drew to a close, God issued to the nation of Israel the keys to national health, i.e., the specific principles necessary to sustaining national existence. The book of Deuteronomy records these great admonitions that serve as extremely relevant advice for America. One insight pertains to the level of wealth and prosperity that characterizes the lifestyle of the average American. Indeed, this country has achieved a greater level of prosperity for a greater number of its citizens than any nation in human history. America's standard of living is the envy of the civilized world. Even the poorest American lives far better than much of the world's population.

This circumstance was anticipated by the Founders who insisted that freedom coupled with Christian principles will enable a country to achieve unprecedented prosperity, progress, and happiness. For example, on October 11, 1782, the Continental Congress issued a proclamation to the nation that articulates this foundational principle, recommending to citizens of

all ranks, to testify their gratitude to God for his goodness, **by a cheerful obedience to his laws**, and by promoting, each in his station, and by his influence, the practice of true and undefiled religion, **which is the great foundation of public prosperity and national happiness** (*Journals of...*, 23:647, emp. added).

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

America has graced the world with unparalleled technological progress, shared prosperity, and benevolent assistance. We literally wallow in abundance.

But this paradisaical status cannot last. America must suffer punishment for turning her back on the Source of her greatness, and for spurning the moral and spiritual principles that propelled her to the premiere position among the nations of the Earth. The reason for national punishment is the same reason given for Israel's expulsion from Canaan. Their punishment? "[T]herefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you" (Deuteronomy 28:48). But why? Why did Israel merit such punishment? Moses articulated the reason in his farewell address to the nation—words that are eerily apropos to Americans: "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, **for the abundance of everything**" (Deuteronomy 28:47, emp. added). If only Americans *en masse* would awaken to reverence and serve the Master of the Universe.

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In the News

In light of President Obama's recent endorsement of homosexual marriage, Apologetics Press would simply like to remind Christians and America at large that what **God** says on any and every subject, on any and every evil, including the sin of homosexuality, is the only thing that ultimately matters (John 12:48). God, not man (Jeremiah 10:23), determines what is right and what is wrong.

God commands that "love be genuine," as we "[a]bhor what is evil" and "hold fast to what is good" (Romans 12:9, emp. added). Regarding the ungodly who suppress the truth, Paul wrote:

Claiming to be wise, they became fools.... Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of

their hearts to **impurity**, to the **dishonoring** of their bodies among themselves.... God gave them up to **dishonorable** passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing **shameless** acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their **error**. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought **not** to be done. They were filled with all manner of **unrighteousness, evil...** (Romans 1:22,24,26-29, ESV, emp. added).

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20).

Eric Lyons



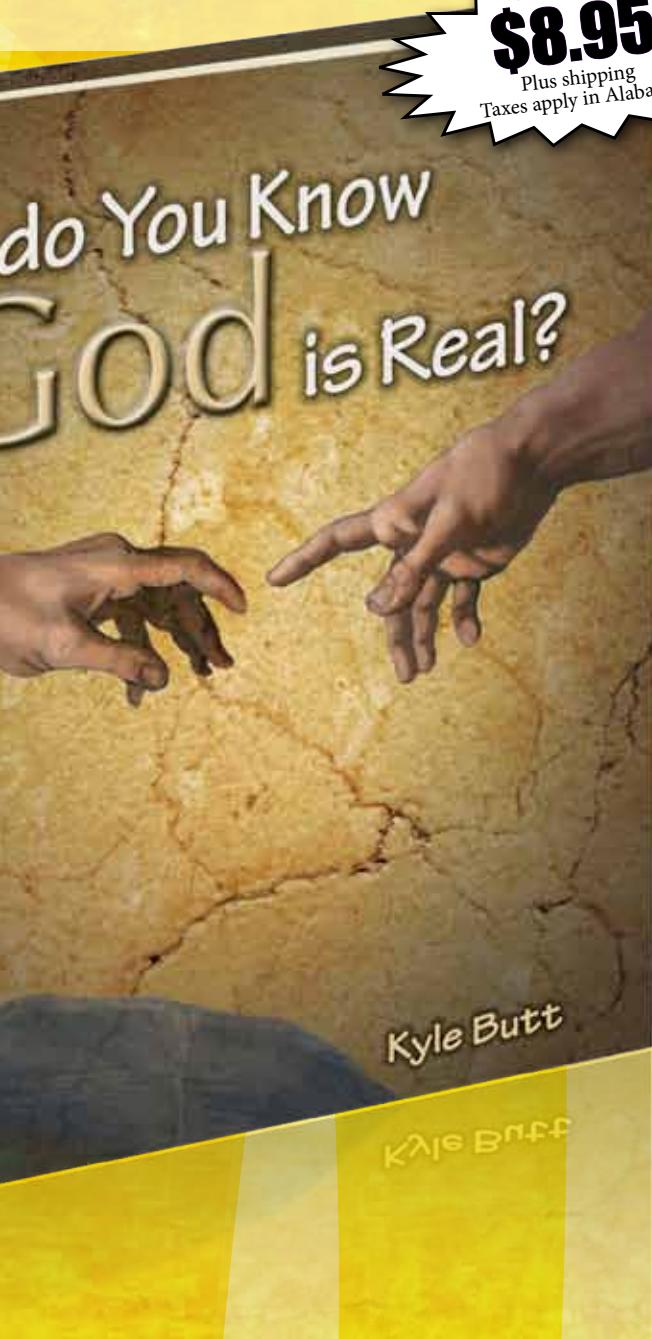


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BART EHRMAN'S

Forged:

Next Verse Same as the First

Dewayne Bryant, M.A.

The past decade has seen anti-Christian books scale the peak of bestseller lists ranging everywhere from the *New York Times* to Amazon.com. It includes everything from the work of new atheists like Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens to new age gurus like Eckhart Tolle. Even in a culture where Christianity has been the dominant faith of millions for over two centuries, it would appear that there is a ready market for works aggressively promoting alternatives to Christianity.

One of the most curious success stories is that of Bart Ehrman. A professor at the highly respected University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ehrman took many people by surprise when his book, *Misquoting Jesus*, rocketed to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list. No one could have ever predicted that a book about textual criticism would have been so popular. After writing several bestselling books, appearing on talk shows, and receiving invitations to speak all across the United States, he could nearly be called an academic celebrity.

Ehrman's style is popular-level and easy to read. It is also highly critical of the Bible. Those who have followed Ehrman's career will note that he has grown increasingly strident in his criticism over time. In *Misquoting Jesus* he argues that the New Testament's authors were guilty of inserting errors, often by mistake. In *Jesus, Interrupted* he muses that Christian scholars and ministers are somewhat dishonest about the "problem texts" of the Bible. Now he says that the New Testament authors were not just mistaken—they were liars.

In *Forged: Writing in the Name of God, Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are*, Ehrman contends that a number of New Testament books were forgeries created by others who had no connection to Jesus. His goal is to expose the alleged deception practiced by the early church, or at least those who wrote

these supposedly fraudulent texts. Some of Ehrman's assertions include: (1) Peter was illiterate and could not have written 1 and 2 Peter, (2) six of Paul's epistles are forgeries, and (3) 1 Timothy is a forgery that has been used to oppress women. Throughout the book he claims repeatedly that he holds the same view to which the majority of scholars subscribe, although he rarely cites any authors who agree with him.

PSEUDEPIGRAPHY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In *Forged*, Ehrman discusses the subject of *pseudepigraphy*—the writing of books under false names—in the first few centuries of the early church. Although he has addressed the issue in previous books, this is his most extended discussion of the topic. According to Ehrman, there were two different types of pseudepigraphical books included in the New Testament. First, some books were supposedly published anonymously but later had authors' names attached, such as the Gospels (although this could not have been possible, since the early church was virtually unanimous on their authorship. If they had been published anonymously, there would be no end to the debate). Second, some were forged in the names of other authors, usually biblical figures of considerable significance. This practice abounded in the early centuries of the church. Examples include the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, as well as numerous other gospels, apocalypses, and epistles. The second category is where Ehrman places six of Paul's epistles.

Determining the authorship of any particular work is an oft-debated topic among scholars, given the fact that an author's language may be influenced by a number of factors. While some scholars were incredibly skeptical of the Pauline authorship of several of the apostles' letters a half century ago, scholarship has undergone some level of self-correction.

Concerning Ehrman's assertions that the majority of scholars deny the Pauline authorship of nearly half of Paul's epistles, professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary and St. Andrews University, Ben Witherington III states:

In fact the majority of English speaking commentators and specialists on documents such as 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians think these documents also should be attributed to Paul, whatever scribes he may have used to produce them. I ought to know. I have researched and written commentaries on all these books. How many commentaries on books of the New Testament has Bart researched and written? None. Not one. And he should not be taken as a reliable guide on what the majority of commenting scholars think about these matters (2011).

In the case of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, as Witherington notes, scholars are becoming less dogmatic about the non-Pauline authorship of these letters. Donald Guthrie surveyed the Pauline authorship of these letters—as well as the difficulties in denying it—and concluded: "There has yet to be a satisfactory explanation of the composition of the Pastorals from the point of view of pseudonymous authorship" (Guthrie 1990, p. 62). Little has changed since Guthrie wrote those words. Ehrman does nothing to add to the discussion, doing little more than restating the same kinds of arguments that Guthrie and others since have found to be both tired and unsatisfactory.

NO DISCUSSION PERMITTED HERE

One of Ehrman's constant problems is his refusal to admit that opposing opinions could be true. Rather than engaging in the kind of diplomatic language that is common among scholars, he dogmatically asserts his view as correct. There is virtually no interaction with opposing views. On the rare occasion when he might mention another viewpoint, it is dismissed quickly. He illustrates this approach in *Jesus, Interrupted* when he says that some of his conservative "students refuse to listen—it is almost as if they cover their ears and hum loudly so they don't have to hear anything that might cause them to doubt their cherished beliefs about the Bible" (2009, p.

14). It does not appear to occur to him that his students may be intelligent in their own right and have investigated the issue for themselves. Apparently, conservative believers aren't the only ones who allegedly engage in this practice. Those who write books critical of the Bible appear to be equally guilty.

Witherington has long been critical of Ehrman's refusal to interact with scholars with whom he disagrees. This is especially true in the case of scholarly treatments of who scribes were and how they went about practicing their craft. *Forged* includes a discussion of the production of ancient documents, but Witherington notes that Ehrman seems to have given little thought to the role and duties of scribes in the ancient world. In other words, he is concerned with texts, but not with how they were produced or by whom. He explains:

I need to say from the outset and on first glance that there appears to be a rather large *lacunae* in the argument of this book, namely the failure to do this study after having studied in depth ancient scribal practices and the roles of scribes in producing ancient documents in ancient Israel. For example, I see no interaction whatsoever in this book with the landmark study of Karel Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, in which it is demonstrated at length that scribes played a huge role in collecting, editing, and producing ancient documents, and that it was indeed a regular practice to name a scroll after either the originator of the tradition, or the first or a major contributor to the tradition (2011, italics and underline in orig.).

As in nearly all of his other popular-level books, Ehrman explains some of the things he considers to be contradictions. But the manner in which Ehrman describes these difficulties leaves the reader with the impression that in the last 2,000 years of biblical studies no one has ever thought through the difficult texts of the New Testament. To be sure, some of these problems are challenging (though none is without an adequate answer), but Ehrman leaves the impression that the only people who believe these supposed contradictions can be solved are those with a pre-commitment to biblical inerrancy. It is yet another example of Ehrman's failure to

interact with other viewpoints. Critics can accept the supposed reality of contradictions all too quickly, and Ehrman proves himself no exception. In an interview on the "Kirkus Reviews" Web site, Ehrman says:

The only people who take offense so far as I can tell are those for whom this kind of historical scholarship is blasphemy. My response to such people is that they need to look not only at the results of scholarship [as I lay them out in my books] but also at the *evidence* that makes these results convincing to scholars of all sorts of persuasions, Christian and non-Christian alike. The evidence that supports my claims in *Forged* is extremely compelling to most people who examine it (Pike, 2011, emp. in orig.).

As always, Ehrman presents his findings as the "result of scholarship," implying that real scholarship—whatever or whatever that might be—agrees with him. In reality, numerous scholars disagree with him—not to mention the fact that the majority of his conclusions are simply false, regardless of the opinions of scholars. He consistently claims that his view is that of the majority, although he provides no defense of this assertion, nor does he point to other scholars who share his views. Instead, he engages in the curious habit of referring back to his own work rather than that of the mass of unnamed experts who allegedly agree with him.

In an article on the Huffington Post's Web site, Ehrman insists:

Apart from the most rabid fundamentalists among us, nearly everyone admits

that the Bible might contain errors—a faulty creation story here, a historical mistake there, a contradiction or two in some other place. But is it possible that the problem is worse than that—that the Bible actually contains lies?

Most people wouldn't put it that way, since the Bible is, after all, sacred Scripture for millions on our planet. But good Christian scholars of the Bible, including the top Protestant and Catholic scholars of America, will tell you that the Bible is full of lies, even if they refuse to use the term. And here is the truth: Many of the books of the New Testament were written by people who lied about their identity, claiming to be a famous apostle—Peter, Paul or James—knowing full well they were someone else. In modern parlance, that is a lie, and a book written by someone who lies about his identity is a forgery (2011b).

Why is this alleged consensus of scholarship not forthcoming about the "truth" of these lies, mistakes, and contradictions? According to Ehrman, many scholars are ministers and professors who have to serve the needs of their clientele (see Ehrman, 2009, pp. 13-14). Ministers don't want to be honest because either it conflicts with their personal faith, or they fear being fired by their elderships. Professors really do know the truth, Ehrman claims, but they cannot be honest about it, because they largely teach in colleges, seminaries, and divinity schools. They cannot denigrate the very texts they are teaching to Christian students without suffering repercussions from their constituency. Simply put, Ehrman implies

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Christian scholars are dishonest, if not duplicitous, and have engineered a conspiracy to keep the populace from learning the “truth.” Conspiracy theories like this have no place in any serious discussion of these issues.

THE CRITICS AREN’T ALWAYS CORRECT

On-line reviews of Ehrman’s work seem to fall into one of two main categories: (1) New Testament scholars who have critiqued Ehrman’s work and point out his tendency to sensationalize the issues, make unsubstantiated assertions, and downplay or ignore evidence that does not agree with his position, and (2) skeptics with an obvious lack of biblical knowledge who lament that the “fundamentalists” are too mired in their faith positions to take Ehrman seriously. That the latter group demonstrates little discernable awareness of the former is somewhat ironic.

In an interview on Salon.com, Gary Kamiya begins with the words, “Bart Ehrman’s career is testament to the fact that no one can slice and dice a belief system more surgically than someone who grew up inside it” (2009). Even so, those on the outside with little knowledge of the subject often make critical errors in their assessment of the situation. Like many other reviewers, Mr. Kamiya seems to be unfamiliar with the literature produced by scholars that answers Ehrman’s claims, points out his errors, and calls attention to the deficiencies in his work.

Though he is respected in academia for his work in textual criticism, Ehrman consistently proves he is no theologian. He continues to trot out some very strange arguments, such as the idea that the New Testament teaches women can only be saved by having children (2011a, pp. 94,100,103; see also 2006, p. 237). There is no question that 1 Timothy 2:15 is a difficult verse (Miller, 2005), but to think that Paul is actually saying that women can only be saved by bearing children borders on, if not crosses over into, the ridiculous. For Paul, salvation is not works-based (Ephesians 2:9). Surely Ehrman knows better than this, since he repeatedly touts his training at conservative denominational schools like Moody Bible College and Wheaton College. **If he was as serious a student as**

he claims in his books, then he should know that this interpretation is both unbiblical and unsustainable.

Ehrman gives the impression that he is like other critics of the Bible who are interested in criticism rather than truth. While he claims to be a “happy agnostic” and repeatedly affirms that he is not a Christian, it seems that he has retained all the passion and zeal of an evangelist, if not an apologist. Indeed, a few have gone even farther and called him a “reverse fundamentalist.” This is not too far off the mark, as his tone over the course of the last couple of decades seems to have gotten much more combative. His earlier books had a softer approach, discussing the issue of unintentional “mistakes” and “errors” in the Bible. *Forged* straightforwardly and repeatedly labels the biblical authors as liars. One wonders if he has not taken a few steps down the same path as the new atheists, whose book sales are roughly proportionate to the amount of vitriol they contain. For example, as of July 2007, Richard Dawkins’ caustic *The God Delusion* vastly outperformed Daniel Dennett’s softer *Breaking the Spell*, selling 500,000 copies to Dennett’s paltry 64,000 at a rate of 9:1. If this is any indicator, then Ehrman’s new book should do well. This also brings up questions concerning Ehrman’s motivation for increasing public awareness about the “truth” of the Bible. In earlier works like *Misquoting Jesus* and *Jesus, Interrupted* he presents himself as a simple informer seeking greater levels of biblical awareness for the general public. Now he seems to be a crusader, or worse, a profiteer.

Ehrman is a highly entertaining storyteller. He has a vast knowledge of extra-biblical works full of fanciful miracle stories. He clearly believes that the Bible is not too different than these outrageous books, but his skill in pointing out their absurdities makes his own position more difficult to maintain. It is apparent that extrabiblical books were not inspired. Recounting their preposterous fictions only highlights their differences from the New Testament. The biblical authors did not include material featuring talking crosses, levitating virgins, bizarre miracles, and divine mischief. They concerned themselves with reporting historical facts. The uninspired

authors seemed much more interested in telling weird stories.

Ehrman promises much but delivers little. Like his other published works, *Forged* makes grand claims supported with surprisingly little evidence, shows almost no interaction with other viewpoints, and, perhaps most importantly, continues to trot out the same tired arguments even though they have been answered by New Testament scholars in sources ranging from published books and articles to blogs and Web sites on the Internet. One of the strong points of Ehrman’s work is that he is a fine storyteller. For a respected academic, it is too bad that he has sullied his own reputation by offering materials that look less like the truth and more like tall tales.

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Marriage Defined

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

As legislators are fighting over the legitimacy of same-sex marriages, activist judges are claiming constitutional sanction in their redefining of marriage, and the rank and file citizens of these United States are embroiled in a polarizing culture war, it is nevertheless unthinkable that the President of these United States has announced his approval of homosexuality. If God exists and the Bible is His revealed Word, then America is facing imminent peril. The evaporation of Christian principles from American civilization will lead to the extinction of civility, freedom, and morality.

In the midst of such depressing circumstances, the spiritually minded may find refreshment in the words of bygone U.S. Supreme Courts. For example, in the 1885 case of *Murphy v. Ramsey* that addressed the legitimacy of polygamy, the high court declared:

For certainly no legislation can be supposed more wholesome and necessary in the founding of a free, self-governing commonwealth, fit to take rank as one of the coordinate States of the Union, than that which seeks to establish it on the basis of the idea of the family, as consisting in and springing from **the union for life of one man and one woman** in the holy estate of matrimony; the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization; the best guaranty of that reverent morality which is the source of all beneficent progress in social and political improvement (1885, emp. added).

Observe that the high Court insisted that the stability of a nation and its proper progress rely on the home composed of one man for one woman for life—the precise declaration of God Himself (Genesis 2:24). For most of American history, courts have had no trouble recognizing and reaffirming the idea of the family and

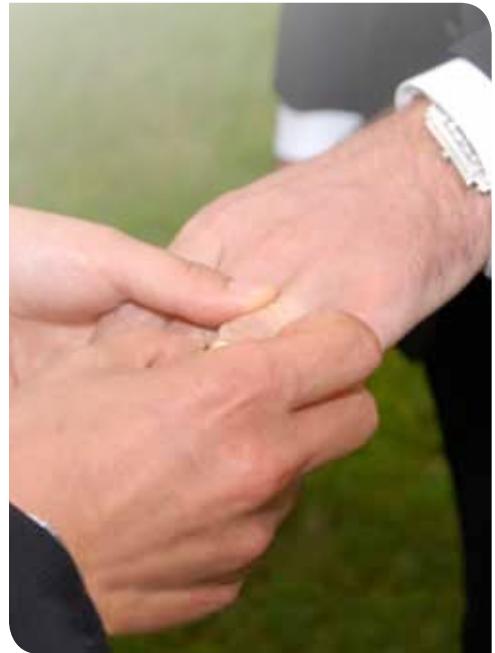
the historic definition of marriage. Such thinking was in complete agreement with and based upon the Bible (Genesis 2:24).

In another U.S. Supreme Court case, *Reynolds v. United States*, after conceding the constitutional right to freedom of religion, the high court nevertheless repudiated polygamy as a punishable offense against society and reaffirmed the foundational importance of monogamy: “Marriage, while from its very nature a sacred obligation, is nevertheless, in most civilized nations, a civil contract, and usually regulated by law. **Upon it society may be said to be built**” (1879, emp. added). Those legal sentiments reflected the views of the vast majority of Americans for the first 180+ years of American history. Departure from that social norm—one man and one woman—results in the destabilization of society.

No wonder in 1848, the Supreme Court of South Carolina articulated the sentiment of the Founders and early Americans regarding what will happen if Christian morality is abandoned:

What constitutes the standard of good morals? Is it not **Christianity**? There certainly is none other. Say that cannot be appealed to and... what would be good morals? **The day of moral virtue in which we live would, in an instant, if that standard were abolished, lapse into the dark and murky night of pagan immorality** (*City Council of Charleston*..., emp. added).

Practitioners of unscriptural divorce, homosexuality, and other sinister behaviors are slowly but surely eroding and dissolving the moral foundations of American civilization—what the Court called “the sure foundation of all that is stable and noble in our civilization.” Will America awaken from this spiritual stupor? Will Christians rise up and react in time? The time has come for those who still retain their moral sensibilities to recognize that we are in a full-scale, unmis-



takable war—a culture war—a spiritual war of seismic proportions against the governmental authorities and cultural forces that now are openly hostile toward God, Christ, and the Bible. May we take heart and commit ourselves to this critical struggle, as we consider the words of God through Paul:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, **but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places**. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Ephesians 6:10-13, emp. added).

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NOTE FROM *The Editor*



New Book for Young People on God's Existence

The assault on the integrity of the Scriptures in the last half century demands a proactive approach by Christians in an effort to protect and rescue the minds of our youth as they are regularly subjected to challenges to their faith. Hence, 10 years ago, Apologetics Press released a monumental volume that was designed to answer a very critical question often posed by young people: "How do we know the Bible is from God?"

But further, what child—growing up in a home where God is revered and His Word is respected—has not also asked the question: "Mom (or dad), how do you know God exists?" It's an equally valid question that deserves an equally valid answer. But what should be a parent's (or teacher's) response? If we really believe what the Bible says—that each Christian must "be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..." (1 Peter 3:15)—then we should be able to sit down with a child and provide an answer that is based solidly on the available evidence. It will not do to say simply, "Well, dear, we just 'know' in our heart that God exists," or "Well, we've always been taught, and we've always believed, that God is real." Those are not adequate answers for a young, inquiring mind. We must do better. Every single child who asks the question **deserves** better!

With that realization in mind, we are extremely pleased to announce the release of the sequel to *How do You Know the Bible is from God?*—a book that was written to help parents and teachers "do better," and to give each and

every child the answer he or she deserves to such a vitally important question. Written on a 3rd–6th grade level, *How do You Know God is Real?* explores simple reasons why we can know that God exists. It will satisfy children's curiosity and equip them to be able to defend their personal belief in God.

In its 13 chapters covering 68 pages, *How do You Know God is Real?* examines such topics as "the first cause," "our unique Universe," "amazing animals," "design in the human body," "evil, pain, and suffering," and much more. The last chapter of the book brings the reader to the all-important consideration: "What does God mean to me?" In addition, the book is filled with gorgeous photographs, illustrative diagrams, youngster-oriented clip-art, and intriguing images. Children will be thrilled with the undeniable proof that God is real.

Priced far below market value, why not order several copies to give to a child, grandchild, nephew, niece, or neighborhood friend? Call us toll free at (800) 234-8558 to order with a credit card, order off our Web site (www.ApologeticsPress.org), or order by mail. A child will thank you—both now, and in the years to come.

Dave Miller

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